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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000032

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SUBJECT: PACIFIC WORKING GROUP DECEMBER MEETING

¶1. (U) The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) Pacific Island Working Group (PWG) meeting was hosted by Australia on December 1 in Canberra.

Australian delegation:

Richard Rowe, First Assistant Secretary, Pacific Division
Ravi Kewalram, Assistant Secretary, Pacific Regional and New Zealand Branch
Tony Huber, Director, Pacific Bilateral Section
Peter Budd, Director, Pacific Regional Section
Stephen Henningham, Director, Fiji and Strongim Gavman Program Section
Berenice Owen-Jones, U.S. Political and Strategic Section
Jane Lake, Pacific Branch, AusAID
Julliette Brassington, Director Melanesia, AusAID

Japanese delegation:

Kiminori Iwama, Director, Oceania Division
Toshihide Ando, Counsellor, Embassy of Japan
Naoki Semmyo, Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan

US delegation:

Alcy Frelick, Director, EAP/ANP, Department of State
Andrea Appell, Political Officer, U.S. Embassy Canberra

¶2. Participants agreed the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in Niue in August was one of the strongest Forums yet, as reflected in the communique. The message sent was strong and significant and dealt directly with the contentious issue of Fiji.

¶3. (SBU) FIJI

Participants agreed to commit their strong support to the Forum position on Fiji and will monitor the issue for further consideration at the next meeting of the TSD PWG. The Ministerial Contact Group will meet December 10-12 and will report on Niue Plus, Greg Urwin's successor as PIF Secretary General, and plans for the next PIF Post Forum Dialogue. As host of the next Post Forum Dialogue, GOA would like input from the US and Japan on how to make the meeting more constructive, beneficial and interactive.

¶4. (SBU) DONOR COORDINATION IN THE PACIFIC

Participants agreed that donor coordination was an important goal to improve the effectiveness and value of development assistance to Pacific Island countries (PICs). Australia would like to see a deliverable from this and ideas will be discussed at the next TSD PWG. It was suggested the PIF might be a good venue for working on donor coordination, however, AusAID said the PICs don't want donor countries using "their meeting" for other purposes.

¶5. (C) SASAGAWA FOUNDATION AND JOINT COAST GUARD EFFORTS
Japan was very sensitive to discussing Sasagawa as a potential partner in maritime security and asked if

approaches were made to the other members of the TSD. The GOJ and the Foundation do not agree on issues in the Pacific and the Foundation has not been involved in the GOJ processes regarding this initiative.

¶6. (SBU) The meeting resulted in a TSD PWG Draft Action Agenda which follows:

Fiji

Participants agreed to commit their strong support to the Forum position on Fiji and will monitor the issue for further consideration at the next meeting of the TSD PWG.

Donor Coordination in the Pacific

Participants agreed that donor coordination was an important goal to improve the effectiveness and value of development in the Pacific Island countries (PICs).

It was agreed that representatives from the foreign affairs and aid agencies of Australia, Japan, the US and New Zealand would look at meeting in February or March 2009 in Japan as part of preparatory work for PALM V and noted the potential value of donor coordination as a theme for the 2009 PIF Leaders' Meeting for donor countries to consult with PICs on opportunities for donor harmonization.

Proposed Micronesian Coast Guard

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Participants agreed that once they receive the letter from the Micronesian Leaders' Meeting on the coast guard proposal, they will liaise further on their response to any requests made.

Participants will further consider the possibility of a joint experts working group to discuss the best use of any

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available funding to help improve Micronesia's maritime security capability.

Energy Security

Participants agreed that it was important to avoid duplication in their efforts to assist PICs achieve energy security and to this end they would undertake a stock-take of their activities on the issue to report to the proposed meeting in Japan next year.

Global Financial Crisis

Participants agreed to monitor the effect of the current global financial crisis and subsequent economic downturn on PIC's and to consider possible options for addressing the situation.

Engaging Other Donors in Regional Coordination

Participants agreed to instruct their posts in the Pacific to assess the level and effect of international assistance on PICs and report this to capitals for the purpose of identifying cases where other donor's aid practices were detrimental to achieving long-term economic and political stability in PICs.

The TSD would then consult on a joint message to encourage better aid and governance practices.

Next Meeting of the TSD PWG

Participants proposed to hold the TSD PWG meetings on a bi-annual basis instead of four times a year as was previous practice. but to make use of opportunities to meet in the margins of other meetings where all parties are present or meet on an ad hoc basis if necessary.

Participants suggested to rotate the hosting of the TSD PWG in order to broaden the range of representation and engagement of US and Japanese officials at future meetings.

Japan offered to host the next TSD PWG on the margins of the PALM V preparatory meeting.

CLUNE